



Billing Code: 4165-15

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Health Resources and Services Administration

Notice of Availability of Draft Policy Document for Comment

AGENCY: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HHS.

ACTION: This is a Notice of Availability and request for comments on a draft Agency Guidance (“Policy Information Notice” (PIN)). The draft PIN provides clarification on the sliding fee discount program and related requirements for federally-funded health centers and Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Look-Alikes. The draft PIN, “Clarification of Sliding Fee Discount Program Requirements,” is available on the Internet at <http://www.bphc.hrsa.gov/policiesregulations/policies/draftsforcomment.html>.

DATE: Comments must be received by the close of business on September 28, 2012.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted to OPPDSFPIN@hrsa.gov by the close of business on September 28, 2012.

SUMMARY: HRSA believes that community input is valuable to the development of policies and policy documents related to the implementation of HRSA programs, including the Health Center Program. Therefore, we are requesting comments on the PIN referenced above.

Comments will be reviewed and analyzed, and a final PIN, along with a summary and general

response to the comments, will be published as soon as possible after the deadline for receipt of comments.

BACKGROUND: HRSA provides grants to eligible health centers under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (PHS Act) to support the delivery of preventive and primary care services to medically-underserved communities and vulnerable populations. In 2011, grants helped fund approximately 1,200 health center grantees, which provided services at more than 8,500 health care delivery sites and served more than 20.2 million people. There are also approximately 100 FQHC Look-Alikes. As described in section 1861(aa)(4) and section 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act, FQHC Look-Alikes do not receive Federal funding under Section 330 of the PHS Act. However, in order to receive the FQHC Look-Alike designation and benefits, FQHC Look-Alikes must meet the statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements for Health Centers Programs under Section 330.

A key requirement of the Health Center Program is for a health center to establish a “sliding fee discount program” that includes a schedule of discounts for services, or “sliding fee discount schedule,” that ensures financial barriers to care are minimized for patients who meet certain eligibility criteria. All Section 330-funded health centers and FQHC Look-Alikes must utilize a sliding fee discount schedule that provides discounts to eligible patients based on their family size and income.

The purpose of this PIN is to provide clarification on Health Center Program sliding fee discount program requirements including: (1) a schedule of fees for services; (2) a corresponding schedule of discounts for eligible patients that is adjusted on the basis of the patient’s ability to

pay (referred to as the sliding fee discount schedule, or SFDS for the purposes of this PIN); and (3) governing board-approved policies and procedures, including those around billing, collections, and waivers or reductions of any fees or payments required by the center for services that support the fee and discount schedules based on an individual's ability to pay. When finalized, this PIN will supersede all other previous Health Center Program guidance and policy issued on this program requirement. However, please note that this policy does not supersede patient billing requirements resulting from a health center's FQHC status under Titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act (the Medicare and Medicaid programs), its implementing regulations, or policies.

HRSA's Bureau of Primary Health Care is making this draft PIN available for comment. When providing comments, please be as specific as possible, and reference the section of the PIN and/or page number(s). Comments will be reviewed and analyzed, and a final PIN, along with a summary and general response to comments, will be published as soon as possible after the comment submission deadline. Comments should be submitted to OPPDSFPIN@hrsa.gov by the close of business on September 28, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions regarding this notice, please contact the Office of Policy and Program Development, Bureau of Primary Health Care, HRSA, at OPPDSFPIN@hrsa.gov.

DATED: July 31, 2012

Mary K. Wakefield,

Administrator

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